

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7320

S E C R E T DAMASCUS 2429

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FOR SECRETARY FROM MURPHY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SY, US

SUBJECT: MESSAGE FOR SECRETARY FROM SENATOR MATHIAS

REFS: (A) AMMAN 2101 (B) DAMASCUS 2393

1. DAMASCUS REFTEL ON ASAD'S MEETING WITH SENATORS MATHIAS, ABOUREZK AND EAGLETON REPORTS THEIR EXTENSIVE DISCUSSION ABOUT LEBANON AND U.S. ROLE THEREIN. THE SENATORS' SEVERAL QUESTIONS ON THIS ISSUE ELICITED HOW DEEPLY SUSPICIOUS ASAD IS OF U.S. IN LEBANON.

2. BY CONTRAST, IN THE JAVITS-ASAD MEETING FOLLOWING DAY (DAMASCUS 2428), PRESIDENT DID NOT DWELL ON THIS THEME. THIS MAY HAVE BEEN BECAUSE JAVITS SEIZED THE INITIATIVE TO EXPRESS HIS DISTRESS OVER THE LEBANESE CRISIS, FIRMLY REJECTING PARTITION AND POINTING OUT DANGERS OF LEBANON DIVIDED BETWEEN MUSLIMS AND CHRISTIANS. LEBANON, HE SAID WAS BUSINESS OF ARABS, NOT U.S. OR ISRAELIS.

3. ASAD'S COMMENTS TO MATHIAS SHOW THAT THE SYRIANS DO NOT, PERHAPS CANNOT, ACCEPT AT FACE VALUE EXCHANGES WE HAVE HAD WITH THEM ABOUT LEBANON AND OUR GOOD INTENTIONS TOWARD SYRIAN MEDIATION. HIS SUSPICIONS OF OUR POLICY DERIVE AT LEAST IN PART FROM HIS FRUSTRATION BOTH OVER THE SEEMINGLY
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INTRACTABLE SECURITY SITUATION THERE AND OUR REPEATED

ADVICE TO SYRIA ABOUT POSSIBLE ISRAELI REACTION. ASAD
ADDUCED NO SPECIFIC EVIDENCE TO MATHIAS OF OUR MANIPULATING
THE LEBANESE CRISIS TO COVER AND DIVERT ATTENTION FROM
SINAI II, BUT HE IS ATTRACTED BY SUPERFICIAL LOGIC OF THAT
ARGUMENT. HE SEES THAT PALESTINIAN RESISTENCE IS
BEING DIVERTED FROM ITS PRIMARY TARGET, THAT HIS AUTHORITY
OVER THE PLO IS BEING ERODED AND THAT SYRIAN MILITARY
POWER IS BECOMING INCREASINGLY BOGGED DOWN IN LEBANON.
AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND WHETHER OR NOT HE GENUINELY
SUSPECTS US, ASAD WOULD FIND IT USEFUL TO HAVE US AS
WHIPPING BOY.
MURPHY

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